

**City of Eau Claire  
Plan Commission Minutes**

**Meeting of June 15, 2015**

City Hall, Council Chambers

7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Messrs. Weld, Pederson, Granlund, Brenholt  
Ms. Ebert

Staff Present: Messrs. Tufte, Ivory, Noel, Genskow

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Weld.

1. **CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CZ-1507) – Auto Sales Lot in a C-2 District**

Mr. Tufte presented a request to allow an auto sales lot in a C-2 zoning district at 2204 Highland Avenue. The proposal has 11 stalls on site and 2 stalls in the building. Two of the outdoors stalls will be needed for employee and customer parking. Previous uses on this site were an auto car wash and a moped dealer which both needed conditional use permits. We are aware of no issues with these past uses. The adjacent north property contains trees and landscaping which will help minimize impact to its residential use.

Applicant, Alvin Walker spoke in favor of the project and stated he will satisfy all conditions.

Mr. Granlund moved to approve the conditional use permit subject to the conditions of the staff report. Ms. Ebert seconded and the motion carried.

2. **CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CZ-1508) – Tavern in a CBD District**

Mr. Tufte presented a request to allow a tavern in a CBD zoning district at 204 S. Barstow Street. The proposal is for a tavern, tasting room, painting venue and gourmet market. The hours would be 11 a.m. to midnight. Based on review of the criteria, the proposal should not create any adverse impacts to the adjacent properties. The seating capacity for the building is 55 people which is similar to the existing seating needs for the current use.

Applicant, Benny Haas spoke in favor of the project and stated he will satisfy all conditions. The back room of the property has already been approved for alcohol consumption.

Mr. Pederson moved to approve the conditional use permit subject to the conditions of the staff report. Mr. Granlund seconded and the motion carried.

3. **SITE PLAN (SP-1524) – Apartment Building, Chippewa Street**

Mr. Tufte presented a request to approve a site plan for an apartment building at 811 and 815 Chippewa Street. The building would contain six units with a total of 30 bedrooms. There would be eight living rooms, eight laundries, and six kitchens. Based on submitted floors plans there

are two three-bedroom units, two four-bedroom lodging houses, and two eight-bedroom rooming house. Two older homes would be removed for the two lot development. Parking is accessed off the alley and proposed at 23 stalls. The rear yard is shown mostly as paved parking and is not in proportion with surrounding development as required by the City's Site Plan Ordinance and Multi-Family Housing Design Manual. Further, the scale and mass of the three-story apartment building is not compatible with adjacent less dense residences. The Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Plan addresses similar concerns on building and parking designs.

Terry Moore, 116 Grand Avenue, representing the applicant Brian Johnson, stated the neighborhood plan encourages redevelopment and the project meets that objective. The owner is trying to improve the dilapidated area and the location lends itself well to this sort of density. He cited other denser developments in the general immediacy that were approved. Required parking has been met and it is compatible off the alley because parcels to the south face Water Street. The project meets all of the zoning requirements of R-M district such as setbacks and pavement coverage. The extra green space proposed will add value to the development. The applicant tried to blend the structure aesthetically by adding a mansard roof, dormers, porches, balconies, bay windows and decorative brackets. The design of each unit is intended to meet modern living demands by students, hence the extra living areas and amenities. They did not meet with the neighborhood but took the previous meeting feedback and made architectural changes. They could have changed the building footprint to be larger; reducing the apartment to two levels, but that would have meant taking away more greenspace. Thus, three stories are needed in order to make the project financially feasible.

Helene Smiar, 320 Broadway Street and President of the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood, stated the association is against the project since it is not following the neighborhood plan and the density is not compatible with adjacent buildings. Added density can increase traffic and crime requiring more resources. They are not against redevelopment but the project is too dense, and would ask the commission to deny the project and direct the developer to work towards a compromise such as a four-plex.

Barb Gramenz, 612 Chippewa Street, stated along the 800 block of Chippewa the houses have big lots and are well-built. A project of this size is too big to be compatible with existing housing. The project goes against the City's Comprehensive Plan and its focus on inner city reinvestments that are harmonious with existing development. She said there needs to be more homeownership to stabilize the neighborhood instead of rentals.

Nick Smiar, 320 Broadway Street, stated there is a conflict of priorities, one of which developer profit and the other, city plans to redevelop the neighborhood in a manner that respects existing development. The proposal is essentially a dormitory and would set a poor precedence for future projects. It could also create major traffic problems. He believed the building could be scaled-down to be more compatible. The neighborhood welcomes students and a diverse group of people and families.

Ken Ziehr, 223 Hudson Street, stated the proposal has not addressed the density concerns of the last meeting, going up from 28 to 30 bedrooms. The scale, mass and parking clash with the neighborhood's goals. Previously some Victorian homes were torn down with two-story

mansard roof apartments and they look out of place. The proposed mansard roof does not even go around the full building and since it is three stories tall, this plain side will be seen from Water Street.

Marlene Arnston, 607 W. Grand Avenue, stated not all older homes in the neighborhood are eye-sores that cause crime. There are owner occupied homes there and a quasi-dormitory style apartment is a negative for the neighborhood.

Jennifer Eddy, 520 2nd Avenue, was opposed to the project but the developer has done some positive redevelopments in the neighborhood.

Mr. Moore stated the neighborhood plan says that housing should be consistent with the R-M zoning for this site. The developer has put forth a code-compliant plan and has done everything that the City requires on a project in the R-M District. The neighborhood plan has designated the peripheral for R-M and this project is in the right location. Not encouraging student housing in the neighborhood is disheartening. Three stories are not unusual in the neighborhood and the site plan should be approved so the developer can begin improving the area.

Paula Stuetgen, 521 3rd Avenue, stated she lives in the neighborhood and was a student living there before too. The association is not against students but against improper density, landlord absenteeism and associated problems.

Caroline Irgens, 411 Hudson Street, stated the neighborhood is a great place for all sorts of people and it well suited for future success being centrally located. A good direction for the neighborhood is to keep the character and vote no on the density of this project.

Ms. Ebert liked the exterior design changes but stated the project is too big for the area. The building is really only suitable for student living. If the developer could scale the project down and make it more conducive for all types of people, it may be more rentable over time.

Mr. Brenholt stated he cannot support the structure's density and the fact no neighbors are in support of it at the meeting is telling. The developer should have met with the association.

Mr. Granlund stated the proposal does not fit the definition of a rooming house, which is when a single family home converts to such. In this case, the project tears down two homes for a new apartment building.

Mr. Pederson stated the proposal is not compatible with the adjacent homes and other housing structures. The greenspace and parking does not fit with the immediate area as well.

Mr. Weld stated it appears this project can be scaled down so everyone is happy.

Mr. Pederson moved to approve the site plan subject to the conditions of the staff report. Mr. Grunlund seconded. All voted nay and the motion failed.

4. **SITE PLAN (SP-1525) – Sign Plan, Water Street**

Mr. Ivory presented a request to approve the sign plan for a multi-tenant building at 522 Water Street. The original staff-approved multi-tenant master sign plan shows illuminated wall signs above the doors along the horizontal brick band. Signs were allowed to be two to three feet in height and either channel and/or cabinet in design. Ambient Inks would now like to amend the plan to allow two signs for their business; one 2' by 4' projecting sign with spot lights and one wall sign. Since there are two public entrances to their rented space, two signs are allowed upon Commission approval. The proposal appears to meet the review criteria of the Sign Code and should not add to sign clutter. Mr. Ivory added that the building owner had contacted him and he would like to include a provision where the other lease spaces could have a projecting sign in lieu of their permitted wall sign, provided such sign was the same size, design and dimensions of the sign proposed by Ambient Inks.

The applicant was not in attendance to address the request.

Mr. Granlund moved to approve the master sign plan site plan subject to the conditions of the staff report including the allowance of projecting signs for the other leased spaces as presented by Mr. Ivory. Mr. Pederson seconded and the motion carried.

5. **DISCUSSION/DIRECTION**

A. Sign Code Amendment

Mr. Ivory presented a request by Sign Art to amend the Sign Code that would seek to eliminate the 8 inches or fewer space requirement between sign text and logos. Sign Art cites many corporate retailers and businesses often have sign spacing and legibility specifications between their business name and logo. Each time they are greater than 8 inches the sign has to be modified to work with what the City requires. This they feel is an undue burden. Staff understands but would recommend some standards be developed so that a loophole to gain two signs is not created. Sign Art is also asking these signs be administratively approved.

Commissioners agreed it makes sense to change the requirement and directed staff to research what other communities have for an ordinance.

Mr. Ivory addressed another unintended ordinance situation where multiple sandwich boards have been found for businesses that contain more than one public entrance. The code for these signs is tied to entrances and the intent has always been that each business has only one sandwich board per street frontage so as to avoid sign clutter on the sidewalk.

Commissioners directed staff to draft an amendment for discussion so that one sandwich board is allowed per street frontage.

Mr. Ivory presented information regarding downtown theaters and meeting halls having difficulty making signage changes due to restrictions in the sign code. A conditional use permit allows 70 square feet in addition to what is allowed, but in most cases this is not enough when calculating total signage.

The commission directed staff to prepare possible amendments to accommodate the issue.

Mr. Ivory presented information on the use of temporary signs related to the display of balloons for special sales. They are used most often for businesses like car dealers. The permit allows them for up to three days and the intent was for larger type balloons. Smaller balloons are becoming more commonplace however and staff would like to address this concern.

The commission directed staff to prepare an amendment for discussion relating to the issue.

B. Comprehensive Plan Update

Mr. Tufte presented the results of the last citizen advisory committee meeting. The draft Comprehensive Plan will be posted on the City's website in advance of the community forum on June 30<sup>th</sup>. He asked the commission for input on perimeter and regional growth language changes in the plan that would instead list general language consistent with the town agreements and their purposes. The towns' representative has been meeting with staff and changes have been sent to her. Language on revenue sharing and extra-territorial provisions were removed and added in were the exceptions to the 10-acre lot size standard. The introduction and summary section of the plan will reference the health and sustainability chapters. The top priorities section in the implementation plan is not needed.

The commission agreed with changes and suggested tidying up some dates ranges on the implementation plan.

C. Code Compliance Items

None.

D. Future Agenda Items


None.

E. Additions or Corrections to Minutes

None.

6. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of June 1, 2015 were approved.

  
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Jamie Radabaugh, Secretary